

End User Profiling Method
Background of the Invention

Field of the Invention

5 The invention relates to a method of creating and storing a
reaccessible, browser independent end user profile on the end
user's computer, at least upon initial access, of an e-commerce
website offering the purchase, downloading and installation of
software or information (data) therefrom, without requiring the
user to repeatedly enter the profile information. More
10 specifically, the end user profile is downloaded and stored
invisibly and seamlessly with the desired data download from the
website.

Description of the Prior Art

15 Heretofore, end user profiling has been accomplished in a more
or less program specific manner.

20 As an example, when a user on the internet accesses a site for
download of desired data therefrom, the user must use a specific
browser (of choice) to gain access to the site. A typical browser
incorporates a function which creates and stores, from input end
information, an end user profile in a particular area on the end
user's computer, with the information only being retrievable by the
particular browser used when creating the profile. One easily
recognized form of such browser dependent function is commonly
referred to as a cookie.

25 Thus, if a user switches between browsers, access to the end
user profile by the new browser selected is impossible.

Further, programming is available which will not allow creation of cookies, requiring repeated user information input upon each access of any site requiring user profiling before access is allowed, or upon installation of an application necessary for retrieval of the download data, if such application requires a profile as well.

Summary of the Invention

Accordingly there is a need in the industry for a method of creating and storing a reaccessible end user profile on the end user's computer which is independent of the browser selected for use by the end user.

Further, there is a need for such method to be accomplished in a substantially seamless manner invisible to the end user, with the end user profile being transferred and stored in a predetermined generically accessible location on the end user's computer, such as in the registry of the operating system in use.

These, as well as other objects are met by the method described in detail hereinafter.

Brief Description of the Drawing

The Figure is an operational flow chart of the method of the present invention.

Description of the Preferred Embodiment

Referring now to the Figure in greater detail it will be understood that the method is primarily proposed for use in an HTML based e-commerce environment, where an end user logs onto the internet, looking to purchase or download a program or information (data) from an e-commerce site.

Although this is the primary purpose for which the method was intended when developed, it should not be construed as limiting, inasmuch as application of the method to other environments of use will become obvious upon perusal of the following description.

In the e-commerce environment, an end user logs onto the internet and opens one of several available browsers. The end user then logs onto a desired e-commerce site via the browser.

It will be understood that, typically, information is polled from the user and downloaded onto the computer of the user in a not only browser specific but browser dependent manner, with the most well known form of such informational data storage medium commonly being referred to as a cookie.

The drawbacks of this type of system are first that the cookie or equivalent is only reaccessible when the end user returns to the website using the same browser which generated the cookie and second that programming is available which does not allow such cookie to be stored on the end user's computer.

Thus, either the blocking of cookies can take place or a switch in browsers will defeat the reaccessibility of the end user information or profile, requiring the end user to take time and

trouble in re-entering information required by either the e-commerce site, or for example, a program requiring registration for operation thereof.

5 The incompatibility in information retrieval between the various available browsers was the impetus in developing the present method, to provide a reaccessible end user profile which is not browser specific or browser dependent and which is stored in a generically accessible location on the user's computer, as will be defined hereinafter.

10 In the method disclosed herein, after the end user logs onto the website, the server of the website determines if a profile for the end user logging on exists on the server. If no end user profile is found to exist, the server can proceed in one of two alternatives.

15 In the first alternative, the end user is polled for information, such as name, email address, etc., and an end user profile is created from the input information and stored on the server. Then the end user is allowed to choose the desired download.

20 In the second alternative, the end user first chooses the desired data for downloading, and, once the choice is entered, the server then polls the end user for desired user profile information such as that described above, etc. and the end user profile is then created and stored on the server.

25 However, if the website server determines that a profile already exists for the end user, the polling does not take place,

and no profile is generated, with the end user being able to immediately choose the desired data for download.

Next, the server generates a download package which includes the data that the end user has selected for download and a preexisting profile extraction program for use in extracting the user profile, which will become part of the download package as will be described hereinafter.

The website server also generates an interactive HTML page having a copy of the user profile on the server embedded within a tag on the page, with the tag pointing to the download package through an active filter.

This is all accomplished behind the scenes, so to speak, with the end user merely seeing a DOWNLOAD button appear on the HTML page.

When the end user interacts with the HTML page by "clicking on" (activating) the DOWNLOAD button, downloading onto the user's computer of the download package from the tag location begins.

In this respect, when the DOWNLOAD button is activated by the end user, the browser being used requests the download package to be transferred through the active filter to the end user's computer.

The active filter, a program on the server, now functions to strip the copy of the end user profile from its embedded location on the interactive HTML page and attaches the profile to the download package being transferred therethrough.

Typically, once transference of the download package onto the

end user's computer is complete, one of two possible options becomes available.

Under a first option, the end user causes the downloaded package to be saved at a desired location on the computer and then manually initializes (begins installation of the data in) the download package.

Under an alternative option, upon completion of the download onto the end user's computer, the download package is automatically initialized by the download program.

Regardless of which option takes place, upon initializing of the downloaded package, the extraction program of the package is activated to locate and extract the user profile from the download package. The extraction program next determines if a profile is found at a predetermined generic, reaccessible location on the end user's computer.

If the profile is found, it is next determined whether or not the profile is to be replaced.

If the profile is not to be replaced, the package activates an install, or other required application, to make the downloaded data accessible to the end user, with the activated application being able to access the reaccessible end user profile on the end user's computer as required, such as for registration, etc.

Alternatively, if the profile was found and it is desired that replacement thereof should take place, or, if no existing profile was found on the end user's computer, the profile extracted (removed) from the download package is placed in the generic

predetermined reaccessible location on the end user's computer, with installation or other application of accessibility of the downloaded data also taking place in a seamless manner. In the preferred embodiment of the method, this location is within the registry of the operating system.

Running of the extraction program is performed in such a seamless manner that the end user is unaware of it functioning, and merely sees that the desired application for accessing the desired data is being installed onto the computer.

The end user profile, having been stored in such generically accessible location, is now available to be reaccessed by the downloaded application as required or by the site server for downloads of any sort, such as upgrades, options, other software, etc., with the returning user being recognized by the site server without need of rekeying any user identification, regardless of which browser the end user should happen to be using to gain access to the site.

It will be understood here that since the most commonly utilized present day operating system is Windows, that the end user profile would preferably be embedded into the Windows registry.

As described above, the method of the present invention provides a number of advantages, some of which have been described above, and others of which are inherent in the invention. Also, modifications may be proposed to the method without departing from the teachings herein. Accordingly the scope of the invention is only to be limited as necessitated by the accompanying claims.